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WLW
CINCINNATI

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

1:15
P.M. - E.S.T.

A SERIES OF DRAMATIZATIONS OF BETTER LAND USE.

No. 165 "BEAN BLOSSOM" June 21, 1941

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER

CAST IN UNISON

We took it for granted that land was everlasting;

We said ownership of the land insured security.

VOICE

Tools would wear out, men would die --

CAST IN UNISON

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: HORROR CHORD

ANNOUNCER (cold)

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: DEEP RIVER

ANNOUNCER

Go west, young man -- from Columbus, Indiana, past the soybean fields and the wheat and the corn and the cabbage, where the hills of Brown County arise sharply, abruptly, and picturesque. This is the Mecca for artists from all over the world -- a land mellow in tradition, where spring buds forth in all its beauty, where summer offers a wealth of shade and shadow, autumn paints the nooks and crannies in a kaleidoscope of color, and grim old winter lays his snowy blanket tenderly over the hills and vales. Here, the Brown County State Park lends peace and charm of the quaint old ways of yesteryear -- here is the scene of the 165th consecutive episode of "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER (cold)

Oh, this is picturesque country, here in Brown County. Hills and ridges, oak and tulip poplar, pine and hickory, hills and ridges, hills and hills....

SOUND: Buzz saw off and on thru....

VOICE OF THE PAST

Cut down the trees! Cut down the trees! Pull the stumps, farm the hills, for there is plenty of land for us all! Slash the oak, burn the poplar -- but clear the land -- for there is plenty of good land to be had for the asking. What matters if land is washed away?

SOUND: Out....

ORGAN: Sneak in Indiana music behind...

VOICE OF THE FUTURE

What matters? The life of this nation is what matters. Show me a land where the soil is fertile, and I will show you good homes -- with paint on the barns. Show me a land where the creeks run red, where the soil bleeds and the cattle starve and little children look wistfully at patches of shriveled turnips, and I will show you leaky shacks, log homes, dingy hovels with dirt floors -- but no, that must never happen to Brown County. It can't!

ORGAN: UP AND OUT

ANNOUNCER

A long, long time ago, long before you and I were born, Jonathan Fox and Isaac Hooper were cutting down the trees in Brown County, cutting down the oak and the hickory and the poplar....(FADE)....

SOUND: Man chopping wood...

FOX (grunting)

There! and there! and -- oh, let's call a halt, Isaac.

HOOPER

Suits me.

FOX

For that matter, you called a halt half an hour ago.

HOOPER

No rush. Nobody's been arrested over at Nashville yet, so they don't need a jail. You know, Jonathan, somebody's going to have a mighty hard time sawing their way out of this jail. It'll take a heap of sawing.

FOX

Brown County's got plenty of good sawyers.

HOOPER

It takes men like that to settle this country. We need more men with sand in their craws.

FOX

But still...there's a better way of getting rid of these trees.

HOOPER

Oho! And you say I've called a halt! Well, what is it?

FOX

We can cut what we need for the jail, then just burn the rest. Better still, gird 'em and let 'em die. There's plenty of trees, Isaac.

HOOPER

I suppose you're right. Let's get a drink from the creek.

FOX (TALKING AS THEY WALK)

I don't see why you'd need a drink. You haven't done any work.

HOOPER

One more word like that and I'll...Look!

FOX (PUZZLED)

I don't see...

HOOPER

There! Give me that cup!

SOUND: Cup scooping up water....

HOOPER

It is! It's gold!

FOX

Gold -- in Brown County. I'd never have thought it.

HOOPER

Me neither. It's not much, Jonathan. We've got more gold than that -- right here under our feet.

FOX

What do you mean?

HOOPER

I mean....listen.

SOUND: Buzz saw off and on thru...

VOICE OF THE PAST

Forget it! Money isn't everything, land is nothing. There is plenty of good land to be had for the asking. What matter if nature spends a hundred years to make a film of soil -- what matter if millions and millions of tiny organisms spend their lives in building that precious depth of soil? What matter if crops wither and die?

SOUND: Out....

ORGAN: Sneak in Indiana Music behind...

VOICE OF THE FUTURE

What matter? What matter, Brown County? What matter, Indiana? What matter, America? What matter if you become

"Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

FOX

I begin to see what you mean. Our soil is our wealth.

HOOPER

Our soil is our life. Now you take that land over around Weed Patch Hill, it's only been cleared a few years, and already it's washing down into the valleys.

FOX

Well, that shouldn't cause anybody any grief, should it? The soil that's washed from the hills is just added to someone else's holdings in the valleys. I've heard tell that the man who owns two hilltops and one hollow is lucky. Oh -- but what do we know about farming?

HOOPER

Nothing -- but maybe we ought to. When all the trees are gone, Brown County'll be farming land.

FOX (REFLECTING)

When all the trees are gone. (SUDDENLY) Hey, look!

HOOPER

More gold?

FOX

No -- over there!

HOOPER

A deer!

FOX

I'll get him!

SOUND: Rifle fired...

FOX

Missed him.

HOOPER

Oh, well, there's plenty of deer in these hills. There'll always be plenty of game in Brown County.

FOX

But when the trees are gone...(FADE)

SOUND: Buzz saw off and on thru...

VOICE OF THE PAST

Who cares when the trees are gone? Burn them down, get them out of the way, clear the land! Farm the steep slopes, let the rivers run red, for there is plenty of land to be had for the asking. What matters if land is washed away?

SOUND: Out...

ORGAN: Sneak in symbolic music.

VOICE OF THE FUTURE

What matters? Oh, foolish man has learned a lesson -- but at what a price. For the steep hills are washed down to bedrock, the soil of Indiana floats out to the sea, schools close and roads are abandoned, churches die and men go hungry. Come with me to Brown County, and go down Greasy Creek Road, to Bear Wallow, Gnaw Bone and Scarce O'Fat Ridge, through Bugger Hollow and Shake Rag Hollow, over Bean Blossom Ridges and into Milk-Sick Bottoms. The trees are back, now -- but the villages are gone for the most part,

"Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT

ANNOUNCER

Thus, the background of Brown County, Indiana -- a region never meant for farming -- passes in review. And now, once again we turn to the United States Department of Agriculture, and speaking for the Soil Conservation Service is Ewing Jones.

JONES

Thanks, _____, and one hasty amendment: there is good farming land in Brown County in spots -- but those spots are few and far between, because the terrain of the county as a whole is mighty rugged, just as rugged as the first settlers. There are something like 800 farms in the county -- as compared to 184,000 in the state of Indiana.

ANNOUNCER

So Brown County really is not an agricultural county, like most of the others in the state.

JONES

Essentially, no. It's a land meant for trees, and now going back to trees. If you'd go out over the Brown County State Park, for example, you'd see some of the most beautiful country in Indiana. There, men like Superintendent Earl E. Phillips of the CCC camp, and Noble P. Hollister, the state CCC administrator for the National Park Service, have changed what once was farmland into a scenic recreation spot in the land made famous by Abe Martin --

ANNOUNCER

Abe Martin -- oh, yes, Kin Hubbard, the man who talked about Lafe Bud and Lem Moots and so on -- the homely philosopher of Brown County.

JONES

And in the western half of the county is the Bean Blossom Land Utilization project, now administered by the State Department of Conservation. Here is a demonstration on 20,000 acres that are not suited primarily for farming as the foundation of a better rural economy based on sound land use.

ANNOUNCER

This, too, was land where the timber had been cut.

JONES

Over-cut badly, _____, and this potential source of income was gone. Wildlife had diminished. Farming, limited mostly to small hill patches, was inadequate to yield a satisfactory living because the soil and the slopes just weren't suited for cultivation. Yet the great value of the area as a playground, as a stimulating scenic spot, and for forests, was obvious. Now this land has been converted to those uses for which it is naturally best adapted -- recreation, wildlife conservation, and forestry. The farming of the infertile acres has come to an end.

ANNOUNCER

Then it's a model for other areas that aren't suited for farming, Ewing.

JONES

Yes, and there are other areas, such as those near Zaleski, Ohio, and Hopkinsville, Kentucky. You see, _____, in the Bean Blossom project most of the tillable soil had already deteriorated and proved itself unadapted for farming. Only a small amount of saw and cross-tie timber remained of a once magnificent forest. Naturally, the condition of the land was reflected in the lives of many of the people, and in social and economic costs to the community. Relief costs were high. Support of schools in the area was a heavy burden. There was widespread tax delinquency...

ANNOUNCER

And now...

JONES

....millions of young trees have been planted on eroded hillsides and abandoned farmland. Other millions will grow from natural seeding. In time, with wise management, they will yield a permanent income. Brown County, Indiana, is returning to its best land use -- trees. Now, _____, if you please, the "Eleventh Commandment."

ORGAN: Sneak in DEEP RIVER

ANNOUNCER

"Thou shall inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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